

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3697

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: SHUM, EAID, PA
SUBJECT: GOP SAYS USG NO LONGER BACKING POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: ASUNCION 3331

1. A MOTHER OF ONE OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN EMBOSCADA PRISON ON HUNGER STRIKE (REFTTEL) GAVE EMBASSY FOLLOWING ACCOUNT AUGUST24. PADRE MAYANS, CATHOLIC CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE IN QUIET EFFORTS TO MEDIATE END TO HUNGER STRIKE, TOLD THREE MOTHERS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AUGUST 23 OF A MEETING HE HAD HELD THE SAME DAY WITH INTERIOR MINISTER MONTANARO. MAYANS QUOTED MONTANARO AS SAYING THAT THE USG HAD PROVIDED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE GOP TO BUILD 2,000 KILOMETERS OF A ROAD NET. THIS ASSISTANCE MEANT THE THE USG WILL NO LONGER EXERT PRESSURE ON THE GOP TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS. THE GOP, ACCORDING TO MONTANARO, WILL RELEASE FOUR OR FIVE OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS SHORTLY IF ALL THE PRISONERS CEASE THEIR HUNGER STRIKE. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THE GOP MAY RELEASE THE REMAINDER AT SOME FUTURE TIME, FOR THE MOMENT THEY WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO VARIOUS POLICE JAILS BECAUSE THE GOP PLANS TO CLOSE DOWN EMBOSCADA PRISON. EMBOFF TOLD THE WOMAN THAT USG HAD NOT PROVIDED SUCH ASSISTANCE AND THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS.

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2. THE HUNGER STRIKE BY 17 PRISONERS IS CONTINUING INTO ITS ELEVENTH DAY ACCORDING TO PRISONERS' FAMILIES WHO HAVE BEEN VISITING EMBOSCADA. THE MATTER HAS REACHED AN IMPASSE AS THE GOP SAYS IT WILL NOT RELEASE THE PRISONERS IF THEY ARE ON HUNGER STRIKE AND THE PRISONERS SAY THEY WILL NOT STOP THE HUNGER STRIKE UNTIL THE GOP FREES THEM AS THEY FEEL BETRAYED BY EARLIER UNFULFILLED PROMISES

THAT THEY WOULD BE RELEASED.

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THE STORY OF THE INTERIOR MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH BADRE MAYANS. IN AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH CENTRAL BANK CHAIRMAN ROMEO ACOSTA AUGUST 21, IN WHICH AMBASSADOR TOLD HIM USG WOULD NOW SUPPORT IDB SOFT LOAN FOR RURAL HEALTH, ROMEO ACOSTA PROBED REGARDING POSSIBLE USG SUPPORT FOR ANOTHER IDB SOFT LOAN TO CONSTRUCT 210 KILOMETERS OF ROADS IN THE CHACO REGION. MONTANARO HAS APPARENTLY USED ELEMENTS OF THE CONVERSATION WITH ROMEO ACOSTA IN AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THE SELF-CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES BY CLAIMING THE USG NO LONGER TAKES AN INTEREST IN THEIR WELFARE.

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